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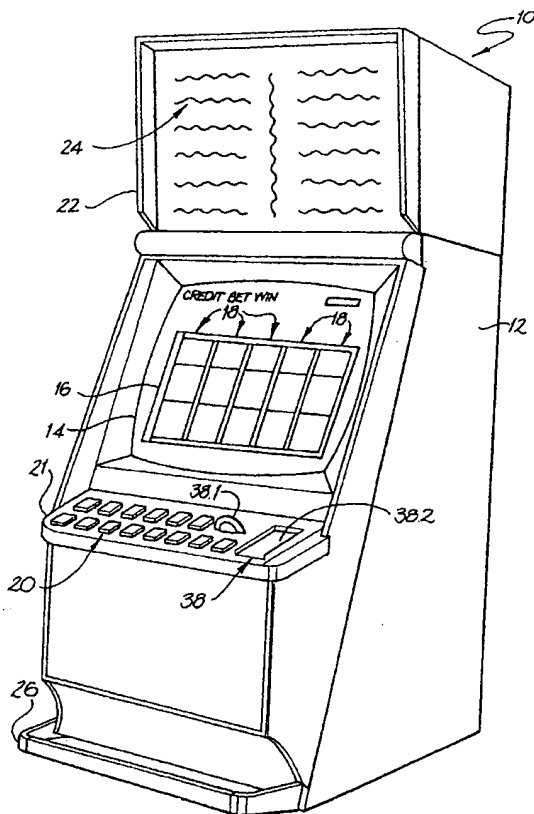
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(54) Title: **GAMING MACHINE WITH WIN CHANGE SYMBOL**



(57) Abstract: A gaming machine (10) has a display (14) and a game controller arranged to control images displayed on the display (14). The game controller is arranged to play a game (16) wherein at least one random event is caused to be displayed on the display (14). If a predefined winning event occurs, the machine (10) awards a prize. When a special symbol is carried by a symbol-carrying element into a display position on the display (14), the special symbol does at least one of altering the prize awarded for a winning result and altering a defined set of winning combinations.

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Gaming machine with win change symbol

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to a gaming machine. More particularly, the invention relates to a gaming machine and to an improvement to a game
5 played on such a gaming machine.

Background to the Invention

Players who regularly play gaming machines quickly tire of particular games and therefore it is necessary for manufacturers of these machines to
10 develop innovative game features which add interest to the games. In so doing, it is hoped to keep players amused and therefore willing to continue playing the game as well as to attract new players.

Also, with the growth that has occurred in the gaming machine market, there is intense competition between manufacturers to supply various
15 existing and new venues. When selecting a supplier of gaming machines, the operator of a venue will often pay close attention to the popularity of various games with their patrons. Therefore, gaming machine manufacturers are keen to devise games which are popular with the players as a mechanism for improving sales, retaining customers and attracting new customers.

20

Summary of the Invention

According to the invention, there is provided a gaming machine having a display means and a game control means arranged to control images displayed on the display means, the game control means being arranged to
25 play a game wherein at least one random event is caused to be displayed on the display means and, if a predefined winning event occurs, the machine awards a prize, the gaming machine being characterized in that, when a special symbol is carried by a symbol-carrying element into a display position on the display means, the special symbol does at least one of altering the
30 prize awarded for a winning result and altering a defined set of winning combinations.

In one embodiment of the invention, the special symbol may alter the defined set of winning combinations. The special symbol may determine which combinations of symbols are to be regarded as winning combinations.

35 In another embodiment of the invention, the special symbol may alter the prize that applies to each winning combination. The special symbol may

award a prize that is higher than a prize that is normally applicable to that particular winning combination of symbols.

Further, in this embodiment, the special symbol may alter the prize that applies to each winning combination in a way that is not uniform across all winning combinations. Therefore, the special symbol may determine which payable of a plurality of paytables applicable to the game is used to calculate the prize awarded for a winning combination.

The special symbol of the invention may be applicable in respect of any type of game played on gaming machines. However, for ease of explanation, the invention will be described with reference to spinning reel games and, more particularly, gaming machines having video simulations of spinning reels.

The special symbol may appear on at least one of the standard reels of the gaming machine. Instead, the special symbol may appear on a dedicated, separate symbol carrying element of the gaming machine. For example, a spinning reel game may have a video simulation of five spinning reels. Then, the special symbol may be carried on a sixth reel, the sixth reel not having any of the standard reel symbols.

The special symbol may substitute for a standard symbol in any winning combination in which the special symbol appears. Instead, or in addition, the special symbol may alter the way wins are determined for combinations of symbols in which the special symbol substitutes.

It will be appreciated that, for a card game, special cards could be added to the deck or, instead or in addition, a certain card or cards in the deck could be designated to act as the special cards in addition to their other functions. Similarly, in respect of ball-type games, such as Keno, Bingo or Pachinko, special balls may be added to the set of balls or certain of the standard balls may double as the special balls.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The invention is now described by way of example with reference to the accompanying diagrammatic drawings in which:-

Figure 1 shows a three dimensional view of a gaming machine, in accordance with the invention;

Figure 2 shows a block diagram of a control circuit of the gaming machine;

Figure 3 shows a paytable for a game played on the machine of Figure 1;

Figure 4a and 4b show screen displays of a first embodiment of the game played on the gaming machine of Figure 1;

5 Figure 5 shows a screen display of a second embodiment of the game;

Figures 6a and 6b show screen displays of a third embodiment of the game;

Figure 6c shows a screen display of a fourth embodiment of the game;

Figure 6d shows a screen display of a fifth embodiment of the game;

10 Figures 7a and 7b show screen displays of a sixth embodiment of the game;

Figure 8 shows a flow chart of the game described with reference to Figures 3 and 4;

Figure 9 shows a flow chart of another embodiment of the game; and

15 Figure 10 shows a flow chart of the embodiment of the game of Figure 7.

Detailed Description of the Drawings

In Figure 1, reference numeral 10 generally designates a gaming machine, including a game, in accordance with the invention. The machine 20 10 includes a console 12 having a video display unit 14 on which a game 16 is played, in use. The preferred form of the game 16 is a spinning reel game which simulates the rotation of a number of spinning reels 18. It will, however, be appreciated that the invention is equally applicable to other 25 types of games such as card games or ball games such as Keno, or the like. A midtrim 20 of the machine 10 houses a bank 21 of buttons for enabling a player to play the game 16. The midtrim 20 also houses a credit input mechanism 38 including a coin input chute 38.1 and a bill collector 38.2.

The machine 10 includes a top box 22 on which artwork 24 is carried. 30 The artwork 24 includes paytables, details of bonus awards, etc.

A coin tray 26 is mounted beneath the console 12 for cash payouts from the machine 10.

Referring now to Figure 2 of the drawings, a control means or control circuit 30 is illustrated. A program which implements the game and user 35 interface is run on a processor 32 of the control circuit 30. The processor 32 forms part of a controller 34 which drives the screen of the video display unit

14 and which receives input signals from sensors 36. The sensors 36 include sensors associated with the bank 21 of buttons and touch sensors mounted in the screen. The controller 34 also receives input pulses from the mechanism 38 indicating that a player has provided sufficient credit to commence
5 playing. The mechanism 38 may, instead of the coin input chute 38.1 or the bill collector 38.2, or in addition thereto, be a credit card reader (not shown) or any other type of validation device.

Finally, the controller 36 drives a payout mechanism 40 which, for example, may be a coin hopper for feeding coins to the coin tray 30 to make a
10 pay out to a player when the player wishes to redeem his or her credit.

The invention relates to the use of a special symbol in the game where the special symbol performs a particular function. Thus, each symbol of the relevant type performs that function when it appears on the screen. Hence, in the case of a spinning reel game, the special symbols will be carried on the
15 reel strips to be displayed at random intervals.

Referring initially to Figure 3 of the drawings, a paytable is illustrated and is designated generally by the reference numeral 50. It is to be noted that, in respect of each of the standard symbols 52 demarcated on the paytable 50, each symbol 52 has three paytables 54, 56 and 58 associated
20 with it.

In the embodiment of the invention illustrated in Figures 4a to 4c of the drawings, a special symbol 60 is carried on at least one of the reels 18 of the game 16. In this regard, it is to be noted that the special symbol 60 could, if desired, be carried on a dedicated sixth reel (in respect of a five reel machine)
25 rather than on one of the standard reels 18. The special symbol 60 in accordance with this embodiment of the invention determines the manner in which a current win is paid if a winning result occurs when the reels 18 are spun. Where the special symbol 60 is carried on the standard reel strips, as opposed to a dedicated reel, the special symbol 60 acts as a substitute symbol
30 in addition to its special function.

In the embodiment of the invention illustrated in Figures 4a and 4b of the drawings, it is to be noted that two separate special symbols 60 are provided, each being of a different colour. The special symbols 60 are colour coded to correspond with the paytables 56 and 58 associated with each
35 standard symbol 52 in the paytable 50. The special symbol 60 functions as a win change symbol.

Referring now to Figure 4a of the drawings, a win is awarded for 3 x K appearing on payline one. Due to the fact that a grey special symbol 60 also appears, the grey payable 56 is applicable and fifty credits are paid. Had the special symbol 60 not been present, only twenty credits would have been awarded.

In the example shown in Figure 4b of the drawings, the winning result includes two special symbols 60, a grey special symbol and a black special symbol. The player is awarded one hundred credits from the black payable 58 associated with the standard K symbol 52. Where two or more special symbols 60 are present, only the highest valued win is paid.

Referring now to Figure 5 of the drawings, a different embodiment of the win change special symbol 60 is described. In this case, each special symbol 60 has a specific effect on the way winning combinations will be paid. It is assumed that wins are awarded for combinations occurring on the three standard horizontal paylines.

For example, a standard payable may be provided where all symbols pay only when appearing in a left-to-right combination on a payline (excluding the scatter feature). In this case, if the grey special symbol 60 appears on the screen, all symbols will pay for a right-to-left combination as well as the left-to-right combination. The black special symbol 60 means that all pays, i.e. the total win, are multiplied by five. The white special symbol 60 substitutes for all standard symbols and any payline win in which such a white symbol 60 substitutes will be multiplied by fifty.

In the embodiment illustrated in Figure 5 of the drawings, a win will be paid for 3 x K because of the appearance of the grey special symbol 60 causing prizes to be paid for right-to left combinations. A further win will be paid for 4 x J on payline two due to the white special symbol 60 acting as a substitute symbol. In addition, due to the presence of the white special symbol 60, the win for 4 x J on payline two is multiplied by fifty. Finally, due to the presence of the black symbol 60, the total win, ie the sum of all the wins, is multiplied by five.

In a further embodiment, shown in the flow chart of Figure 8 of the drawings, the special symbol functions as a pay upgrade symbol and, when it substitutes in a win, the prize that will be awarded will be for the equivalent combination of the next symbol on the payable. For example, if a 3 x Q

combination has the pay upgrade symbol substituting, then the prize paid will be for a 3 x K combination.

Instead, the upgrade could be applied to the number of symbols in the combination rather than the symbol itself. For example, a 3 x Q combination
5 would be upgraded to a 4 x Q combination.

In yet a further variation, the upgrade could always go straight to the top award symbol such that, if symbol A is the highest paying symbol on the scorecard, then a 3 x Q winning combination would upgrade to a 3 x A winning combination.

10 Instead of the upgrade symbol acting as a substitute in a winning combination of symbols, the upgrade feature could apply to all wins on the screen whenever the upgrade symbol is spun up anywhere on the screen.

Referring now to Figures 6a to 6c of the drawings, yet a further embodiment of the win change special symbol is described. Once again, for
15 all three examples described below, it is assumed that wins are awarded for combinations occurring on the three standard horizontal paylines.

In this embodiment, more than one special symbol 60 could be provided where each has a different function when substituting in a win. The preferred method is where four different special symbols 60.1 to 60.4 are
20 provided. Special symbol 60.1 substitutes as a symbol in a winning combination for a left-to-right or right-to-left win, hereinafter referred to as an each way win, special symbol 60.2 for an "any" win, special symbol 60.3 for a left-to-right win and special symbol 60.4 for a right-to-left win. Thus, for example, the left-to-right special symbol 60.3 will only substitute in left-to-
25 right winning combinations.

Hence, in the example shown in Figure 6a of the drawings wins would be provided for 2 x 10 because of "left-to-right" symbol 60.3, 3 x Q because of "right-to-left" symbol 60.4, 3 x J and 3 x 10 because of "each way" symbol 60.1 and 3 x K, 2 x B and 2 x J because of the "any" symbol 60.2.

30 If, however, the special symbols appeared in the combination shown in Figure 6b of the drawings, the result would be the following; 3 x J with "left-to-right" 60.3 substituting, 3 x Q with "each way" symbol 60.1 substituting and 3 x Q and 2 x 10 with the "any" symbol 60.2 substituting.

Instead, the different functions of the special symbols could be where
35 one functions as a standard substitute on a payline as shown by special symbol 62.1 in Figure 6c of the drawings, another functions as a substitute

above or on the payline as shown by special symbol 62.2, yet another symbol 62.3 substitutes below or on the payline for combinations on the payline and yet another symbol 62.4 substitutes on, above or below the payline. It is assumed that the standard three horizontal paylines with a left-to-right
5 paying combination applies.

In the example shown in Figure 6c of the drawings, assuming only the highest win pays on any payline, prizes are awarded for 3 x J on payline two due to special symbol 62.1, 5 x Q on payline three due to special symbol 62.3 and 3 x K due to special symbols 62.2 and 62.3.

10 In Figure 6d of the drawings, a further version of this embodiment is illustrated. It is assumed in this embodiment that the screen display is for a four reel game. Then, a fifth reel 18 is a dedicated reel carrying the special symbols 60.1 to 60.4 (only symbols 60.1, 60.2 and 60.3 being displayed). the special symbols 60.1 to 60.4 do not serve a substitute function, but only an
15 indicative function. Once again, assuming a three line game, no win is achieved on payline one. If the game pays for two of a kind and because of the presence of the special symbol 60.3, a prize is paid for 2 x J on payline two. Due to the presence of the special symbol 60.1, a prize is paid for 3 x Q on payline three.

20 The fifth reel of this version may only spin up or highlight one of the special symbols 60.1 to 60.4 at a time in which case the relevant special symbol will apply to all the active paylines of the game.

Referring to Figures 7a and 7b of the drawings, a further embodiment of the win change special symbol is described. Once again, it is assumed that
25 only the three standard horizontal paylines apply.

In the example illustrated in Figure 7a of the drawings, a prize is awarded only for 4 x Q left-to-right on payline 3.

However, when a special symbol 64 is spun up anywhere on the screen, it determines that left-to-right scatter combinations of symbols now
30 pay instead of the symbols having to occur on the paylines. Accordingly, in the example shown in Figure 7b of the drawings, a prize is paid for 5 x J, 4 x Q and 3 x 9.

Hence, it is an advantage of the invention that a special symbol is provided which, it is believed, will enhance player interest.

35 It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the

specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

CLAIMS:

1. A gaming machine having a display means and a game control means arranged to control images displayed on the display means, the game control means being arranged to play a game wherein at least one random event is caused to be displayed on the display means and, if a predefined winning event occurs, the machine awards a prize, the gaming machine being characterized in that, when a special symbol is carried by a symbol-carrying element into a display position on the display means, the special symbol does at least one of altering the prize awarded for a winning result and altering a defined set of winning combinations.
2. The gaming machine of claim 1 in which the special symbol alters the defined set of winning combinations.
3. The gaming machine of claim 2 in which the special symbol determines which combinations of symbols are to be regarded as winning combinations.
4. The gaming machine of any one of the preceding claims in which the special symbol alters the prize that applies to each winning combination.
5. The gaming machine of claim 4 in which the special symbol awards a prize that is higher than a prize that is normally applicable to that particular winning combination of symbols.
6. The gaming machine of claim 4 or claim 5 in which the special symbol alters the prize that applies to each winning combination in a way that is not uniform across all winning combinations.
7. The gaming machine of claim 6 in which the special symbol determines which payable of a plurality of paytables applicable to the game is used to calculate the prize awarded for a winning combination.

8. The gaming machine of any one of the preceding claims in which the special symbol appears on at least one of the conventional symbol carrying elements of the gaming machine.
- 5 9. The gaming machine of claim 8 in which the special symbol substitutes for a standard symbol in any winning combination in which the special symbol appears.
- 10 10. The gaming machine of claim 8 or claim 9 in which the special symbol alters the way wins are determined for combinations of symbols in which the special symbol substitutes.
- 15 11. The gaming machine of any one of claims 1 to 7 inclusive in which the special symbol appears on a dedicated, separate symbol carrying element of the gaming machine.

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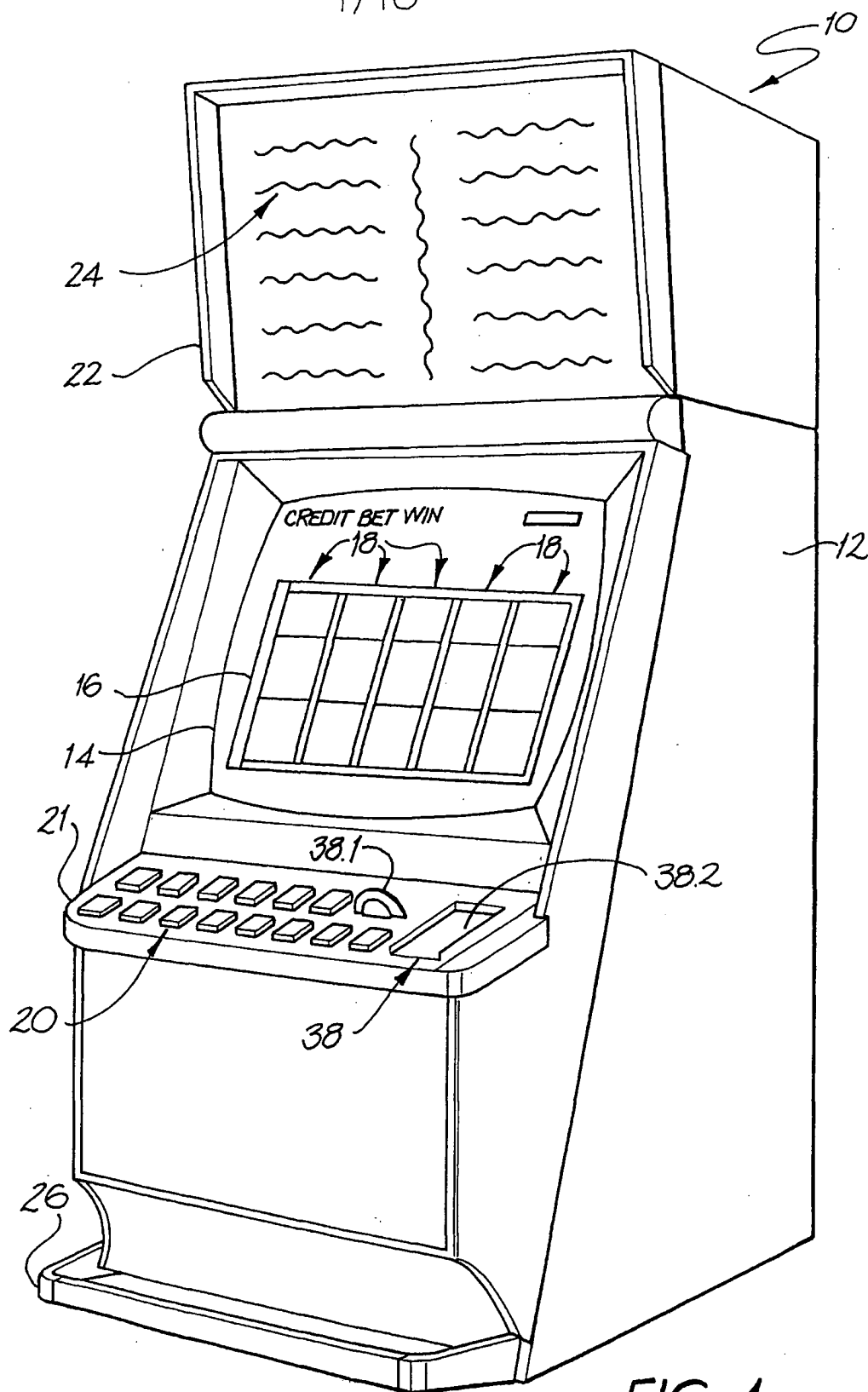


FIG. 1

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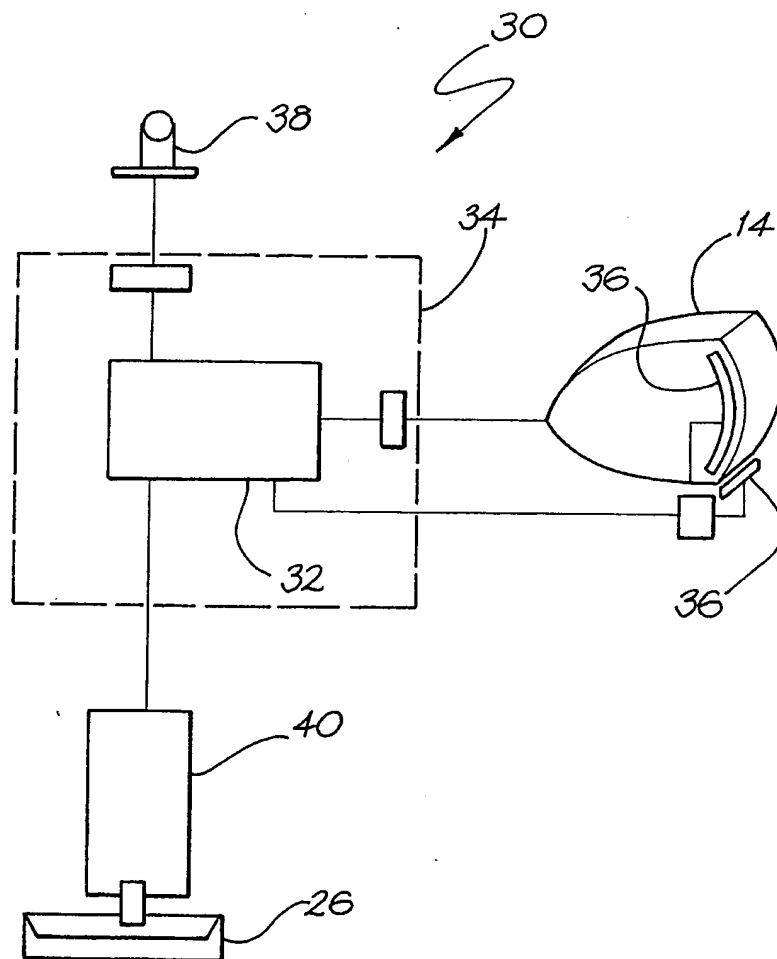


FIG. 2

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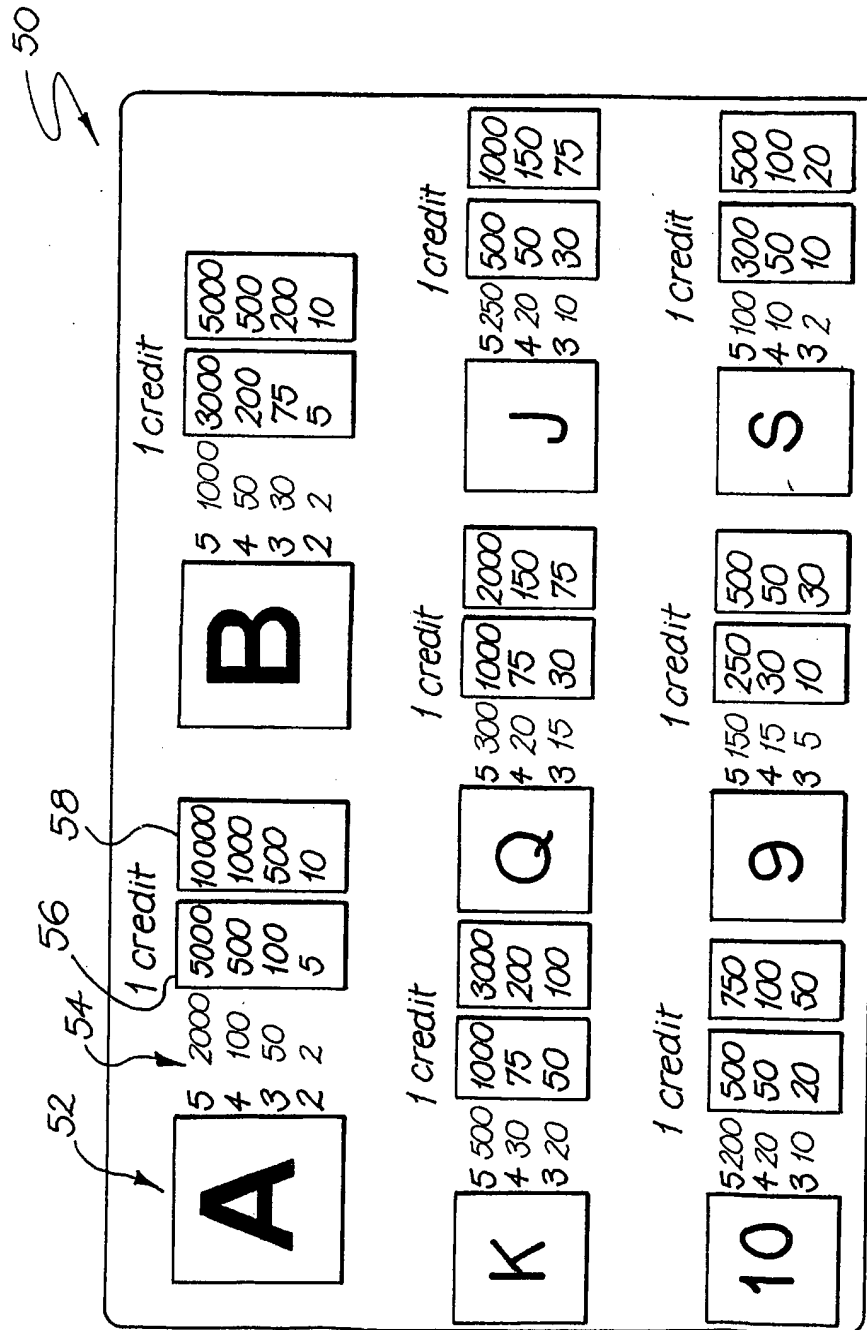





FIG. 3

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S	J	Q	A	9
K	K	K	J	B
Q	10		B	J

60

FIG. 4a

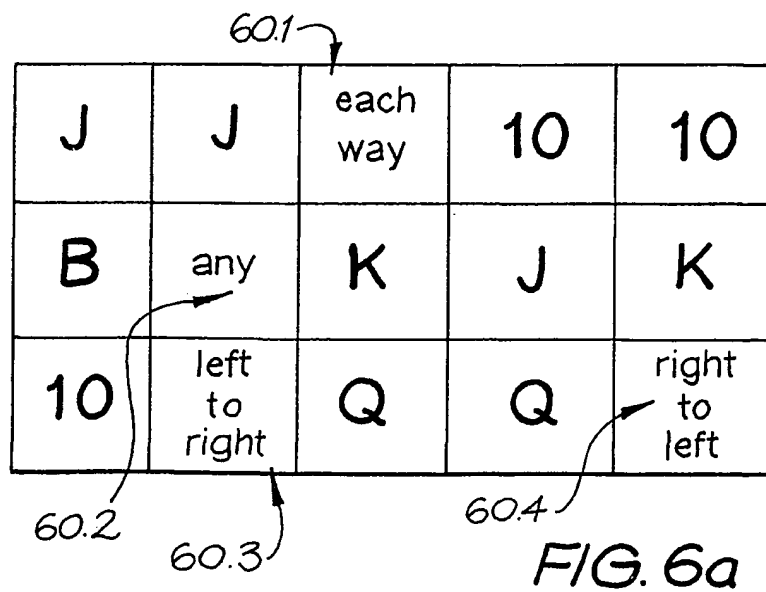
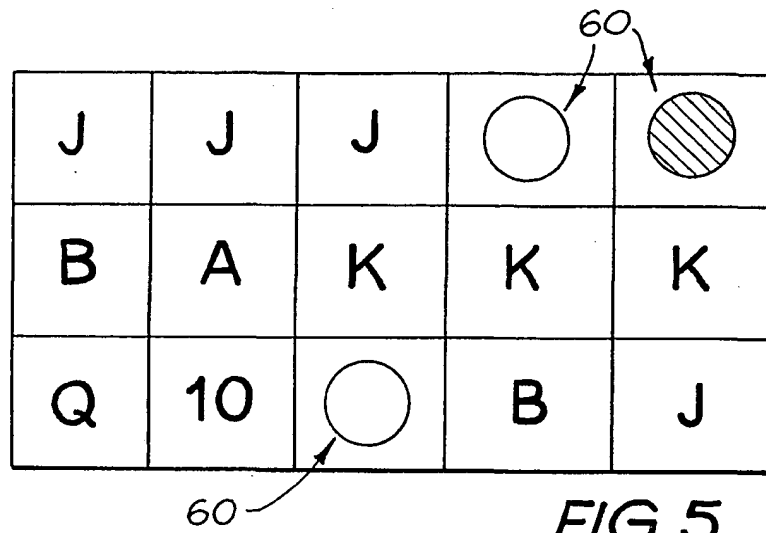
S	J	Q	A	
K	K	K	J	B
Q	10		B	J

60

60

FIG. 4b

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J	J	left to right	10	10
B	right to left	K	J	K
10	any	Q	Q	each way

60.2 (pointing to 'left to right')
60.1 (pointing to 'each way')
60.4 (pointing to 'any')
60.2 (pointing to 'any')

FIG. 6b

J	J	on line	10	10
B	on or above line	K	J	on/ above/ below line
on or below line	B	Q	Q	Q

62.1 (pointing to 'on line')
62.4 (pointing to 'on/above/below line')
62.3 (pointing to 'on or below line')
62.2 (pointing to 'B' in row 3, column 2)

FIG. 6c

J	J	9	10	left to right
B	9	K	J	any
10	Q	Q	Q	each way

18 (pointing to the top right corner)
60.3 (pointing to 'left to right')
60.2 (pointing to 'any')
60.1 (pointing to 'each way')

FIG. 6d

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9	J	9	10	Q
J	9	J	J	K
Q	Q	Q	Q	J

FIG. 7a


9	J	9	10	
J	9	J	J	K
Q	Q	Q	Q	J

FIG. 7b

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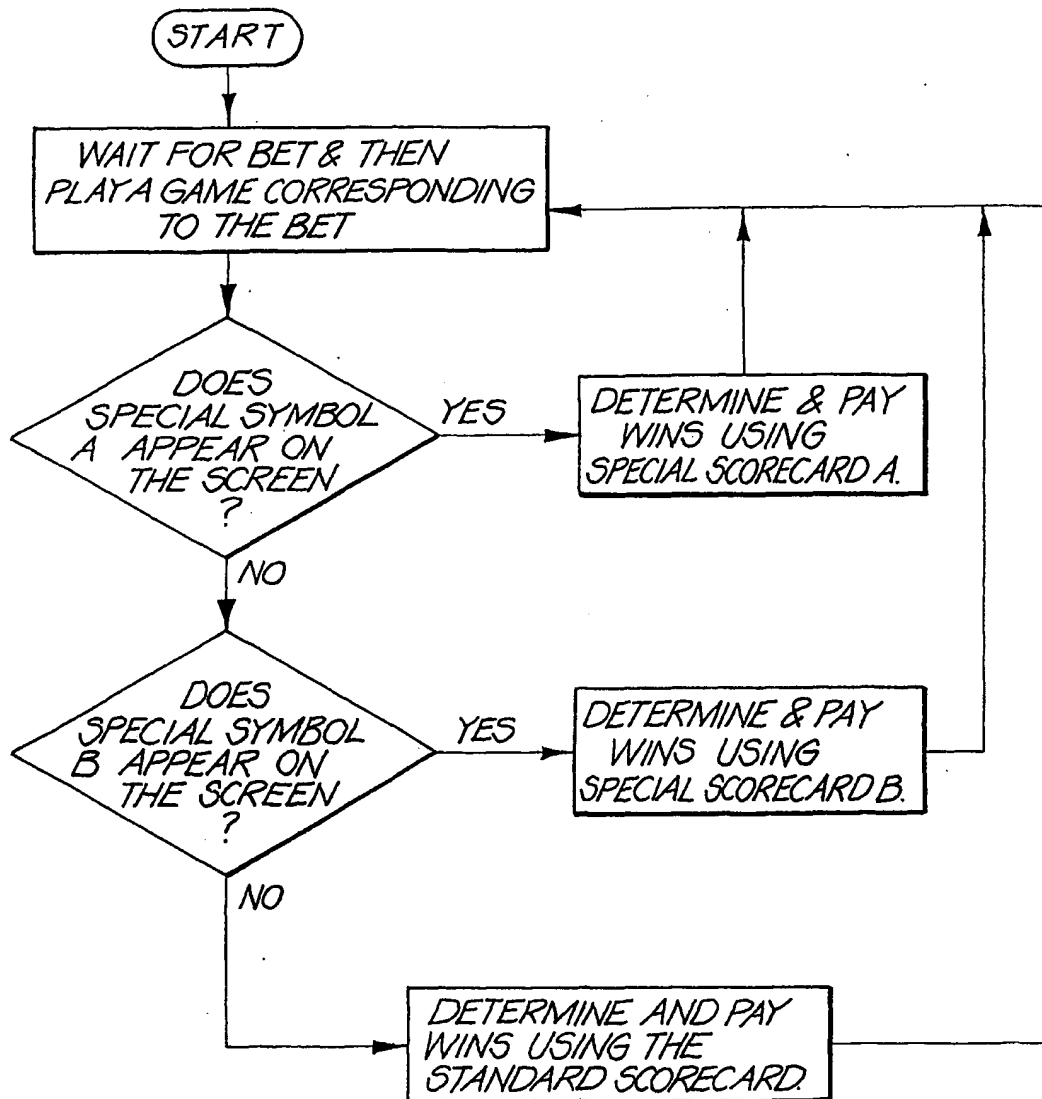
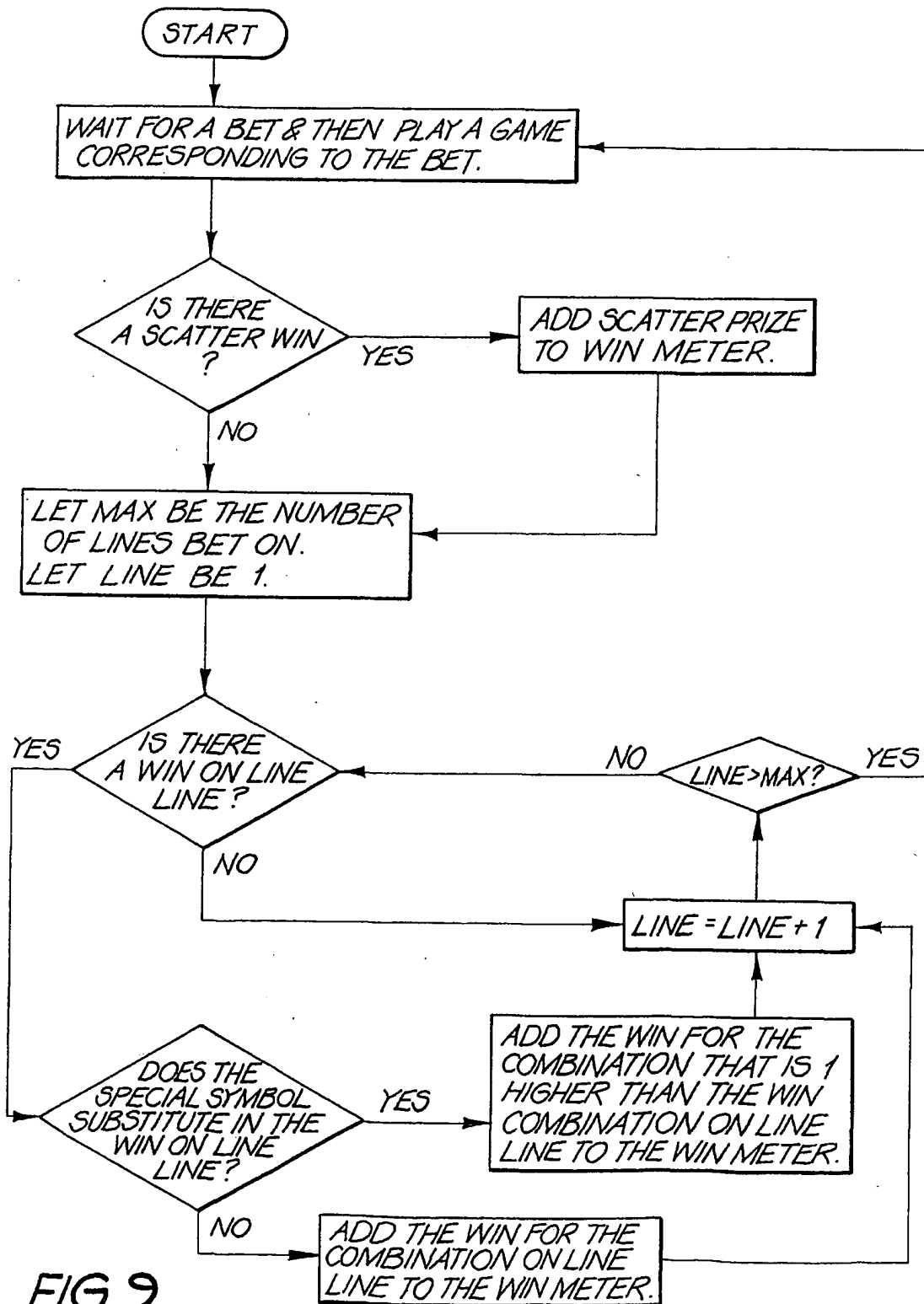


FIG. 8

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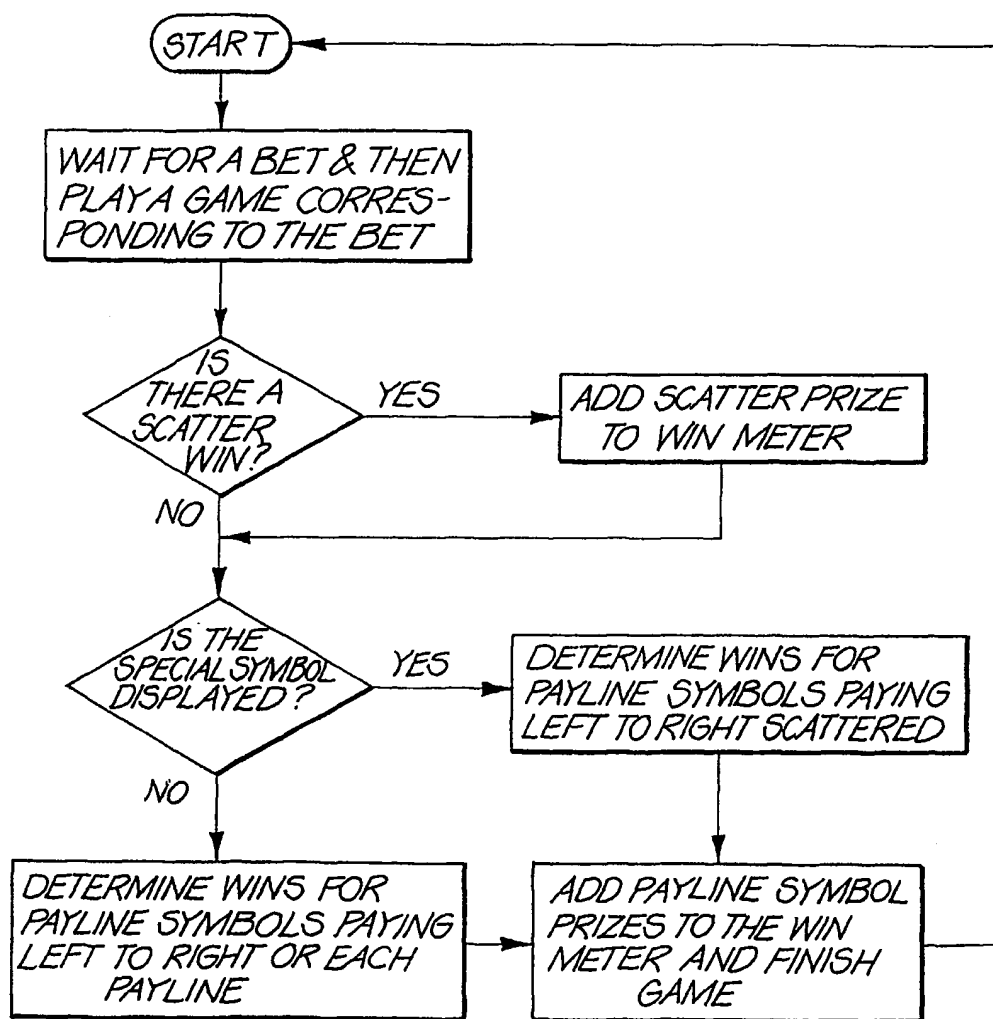


FIG. 10